

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 253822

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING; OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR AMBASSADORS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 426 - OCTOBER 20, 1977
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NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. ISRAEL: YADIN'S DMC HAS REVERSED ITS EARLIER REFUSAL TO JOIN BEGIN'S GOVERNING COALITION. IN A MEETING LATE ON OCTOBER 19, THE DMC SECRETARIAT--COMPOSED OF THE PARTY'S KNESSET FACTION AND EIGHT OTHER LEADERS--VOTED TO ENTER THE GOVERNMENT. THIS DECISION WAS ENDORSED BY THE LARGER DMC COUNCIL LATE OCTOBER 20.

2. BEGIN HAS SEVERAL REASONS FOR WANTING THE DMC IN THE

GOVERNMENT. IT WILL:

--EXPAND, BY THE ADDITION OF THE DMC'S 15 SEATS, THE LIKUD'S NARROWLY-BASED COALITION INTO A MORE COMFORTABLE MAJORITY;

--LESSEN HIS DEPENDENCE ON THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES AND THUS GIVE HIM A MEANS OF COUNTERING TO SOME EXTENT THE LATTER'S PRESSURES ON SETTLEMENTS AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES WHEN HE DEEMS IT EXPEDIENT TO DO SO;

--PROVIDE A MEANS PARTIALLY TO UNDERCUT THE APPARENT GROWING PRESSURE AND CRITICISM FROM HIS RIGHTWING SUPPORTERS;

--SIGNAL TO THE US, IN PARTICULAR, THAT HE HAS BROAD POLITICAL AND PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HIS POLICIES.

3. THE DMC AND LIKUD HAVE CONDUCTED INTERMITTENT NEGOTIATIONS SINCE BEGIN'S ELECTION VICTORY ON DMC ENTRY INTO THE COALITION. ON THREE OCCASIONS, HOWEVER, DMC

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LEADERS BROKE OFF THE TALKS, SAYING THAT THE LIKUD WAS UNWILLING TO COMPROMISE ON SEVERAL OF THE DMC'S MAJOR CONCERNS: THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARD THE WEST BANK, THE "WHO IS A JEW" QUESTION, AND THE DMC'S DEMAND FOR ELECTORAL REFORM.

4. IN ITS DESIRE TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT, THE DMC APPARENTLY HAS BACKED OFF FROM SOME OF ITS EARLIER CONDITIONS. AS EMBASSY TEL AVIV OBSERVED, THE DMC WILL BE ENTERING THE GOVERNMENT LARGELY ON THE BASIS OF THE DEAL BEGIN OFFERED THE LAST TIME AROUND:

--YADIN WILL BECOME THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, AND THE DMC WILL ALSO RECEIVE THE JUSTICE, SOCIAL BETTERMENT, AND TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS PORTFOLIOS;

--THE ISSUE OF WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS CAN BE REFERRED TO THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE ON THE INITIATIVE OF ANY SINGLE CABINET MEMBER, AND THE DMC WILL BE FREE TO ABSTAIN ON WEST BANK-RELATED VOTES IN THE KNESSET;

--A COMMITTEE REPRESENTING THE COALITION PARTIES WILL STUDY ELECTORAL REFORM, AND THE DMC CAN VOTE AS IT CHOOSES ON SUBSEQUENT LEGISLATION.

--DMC KNESSET MEMBERS WILL BE ABLE TO VOTE THEIR CONSCIENCE ON RELIGIOUS ISSUES.

ALTHOUGH THESE TERMS AFFORD THE DMC SOME MANEUVERABILITY AND INFLUENCE, THEY ARE LARGELY COSMETIC. BEGIN DID NOT MAKE ANY MAJOR CONCESSIONS ON ISSUES HE REGARDS AS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT.

5. YADIN'S ATTITUDE APPARENTLY WAS CRUCIAL TO THE DECISION OF THE DMC LEADERSHIP. PRESSURE WAS BUILDING
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WITHIN THE PARTY FOR JOINING THE COALITION; YADIN'S SUPPORT FOR THIS MOVE APPARENTLY TIPPED THE BALANCE. AT THE SAME TIME, SENTIMENT WAS ALSO BUILDING WITHIN THE LIKUD AND THE NRP FOR DMC PARTICIPATION. THE NRP'S WILLINGNESS AT LEAST TO DISCUSS ELECTORAL REFORM AND TO WAIVE ITS RIGHT TO VETO REFORM PROPOSALS SEEMS TO HAVE PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN BREAKING THE DEADLOCK IN THE COALITION NEGOTIATIONS.

6. YADIN, IN DROPPING HIS OPPOSITION TO JOINING THE COALITION LARGELY ON BEGIN'S TERMS, PROBABLY TOOK SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS INTO ACCOUNT:

--HIS PERCEPTION THAT A US-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION IS BECOMING MORE LIKELY;

--BEGIN'S POOR HEALTH, WHICH, IN THE VIEW OF EMBASSY TEL AVIV'S CONTACTS, PROBABLY HAS NOW MADE THE POSITION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER VERY ATTRACTIVE TO YADIN;

--A DMC DESIRE TO GAIN GREATER POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND RECOGNITION, AND ITS BELIEF THAT, IF IT REMAINED IN OPPOSITION, IT WOULD FADE AWAY AS A VIABLE PARTY AND PERHAPS SPLINTER.

7. YADIN MAY ALSO HAVE JUDGED THAT, WITH THE LABOR PARTY IN DISARRAY, NO COHESIVE OPPOSITION COULD BE FORMED AND THE DMC'S ROLE, THEREFORE, WOULD BE FURTHER REDUCED. WHATEVER HIS REASON, THERE WILL BE THOSE WHO ASSUME THAT HIS DECISION HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH WHAT HE WAS TOLD ABOUT US VIEWS DURING HIS US VISIT.

8. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE DMC WILL BE ABLE
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TO EXERCISE A SIGNIFICANT MODERATING INFLUENCE ON BEGIN, EITHER IN FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC POLICY. BEGIN'S ABILITY TO BE "TACTICALLY FLEXIBLE," HOWEVER WILL CONTINUE TO BE CONSTRAINED BY HIS HARDLINE SUPPORTERS, A POLITICAL REALITY YADIN'S COUNSELS OF MODERATION PROBABLY WOULD NOT AFFECT. BEGIN HIMSELF HOLDS BASICALLY THE SAME VIEWS

AS THESE HARDLINERS AND WILL CONTINUE TO CONTROL THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY, BARRING SERIOUS ILLNESS. MOREOVER, YADIN MAY HAVE DIMINISHED HIS OWN ABILITY TO INFLUENCE COALITION POLICY BY HIS ACCEPTANCE OF MOST OF BEGIN'S TERMS, THUS SHOWING THAT HE WANTED INTO THE GOVERNMENT MORE THAN BEGIN WANTED HIM AND HIS PARTY. (SECRET)

9. EGYPT. EGYPTIAN PRESS COVERAGE (OBVIOUSLY GUIDED BY FAHMY) AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S WEDNESDAY ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY STRESS THAT THE MIDEAST "WORKING PAPER" IS A FLEXIBLE DOCUMENT AND SUGGEST THAT IT IS NOW EGYPT'S TURN TO SEEK CLARIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS. THE MEDIA AND FAHMY ALSO INDICATE THAT EGYPT IS PUBLICLY REMAINING FIRM IN SUPPORT OF THE PLO'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE AT GENEVA (DIRECTLY OR THROUGH REPRESENTATIVES WHICH IT SELECTS) AND ON THE ISSUES OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL AND THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE. FAHMY, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, ALSO STATED THAT THE ISRAELI DEMAND FOR FULL DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH OPEN BORDERS IS UNACCEPTABLE, ALTHOUGH HE DID POINT OUT TO THE ASSEMBLY THAT BOTH SUPERPOWERS FAVOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AS PART OF A SETTLEMENT.

10. THE EGYPTIAN ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 19 ENDED ITS LONGEST SESSION SINCE 1924, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY CAIRO. THE SESSION'S ACHIEVEMENTS WERE MIXED, AND IMPORTANT LEGISLATION ON TAXES AND THE PRESS REMAIN OUTSTANDING. THE ASSEMBLY DID, HOWEVER, PASS A PARTIES BILL, WHICH
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THE EMBASSY OBSERVED MAKES THE FORMATION OF NEW POLITICAL PARTIES DIFFICULT. MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, THE ASSEMBLY INCREASINGLY HAS PROVED THAT IT IS MORE THAN A RUBBER STAMP BODY, BY ON OCCASION SUCCESSFULLY MODIFYING, DELAYING OR RETURNING GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED LEGISLATION.

11. ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, EMBASSY CAIRO NOTED RECENT PUBLICITY ACCORDED TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF ARAB SOCIALIST UNION SUPPORT FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SUBSIDIES ON KEY COMMODITIES. THE EMBASSY COMMENTED THAT THE EGYPTIANS MAY BE TRYING TO CONVINCE THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND THAT SUBSIDIES ON NON-ESSENTIAL ITEMS WILL BE ELIMINATED WHILE SIGNALLING THE PUBLIC THAT SUBSIDIES WILL BE RETAINED ON THE ESSENTIALS.
(CONFIDENTIAL).

12. SYRIA: THE SYRIAN PRESS HAS ANNOUNCED THAT AIR FORCE COMMANDER JAMIL AND FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM WILL TRAVEL TO VARIOUS ARAB STATES TO CONVEY SYRIAN VIEWS ON CURRENT PEACE EFFORTS. EMBASSY DAMASCUS COMMEN-

TED THAT OCTOBER 20 EDITORIALS IN THE SYRIAN PRESS INDICATED THAT SYRIA WOULD TRY TO FORGE A COMMON ARAB FRONT AGAINST THE WORKING PAPER, IN AN EFFORT TO HAVE IT AMENDED TO ONE BETTER MEETING SYRIAN CONCERNS. THE SYRIANS IN PARTICULAR ARE INSISTING THAT PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA MUST BE THROUGH THE PLO, AND HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT SEVERAL OF THE PROCEDURAL ASPECTS OF GENEVA. THEY, FOR EXAMPLE, WISH THE VARIOUS PROPOSED COMMITTEES TO BE FUNCTIONAL (I.E. FOCUS ON BROAD QUESTIONS SUCH AS ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND GUARANTEES FOR PEACE) RATHER THAN GEOGRAPHIC. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

13. LEBANON. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY BEIRUT, CHRISTIAN
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LEADERS CONTINUE TO EXPRESS SKEPTICISM OVER THE PROSPECTS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SHTAWRAH AGREEMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON. SHAMOUN TOLD THE PRESS OCTOBER 16 THAT THE PALESTINIAN PROMISE TO WITHDRAW "COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED CREDIBLE" UNLESS IT ACTUALLY BEGAN. SIMILARLY, GEMAYEL STATED RECENTLY THAT CURRENT EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH REMAIN "AT THE STAGE OF SIMPLE DECLARATIONS." (CONFIDENTIAL)

14. NORTH YEMEN: ACCORDING TO THE US DEFENSE ATTACHE IN SANA, THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE NORTH YEMEN CAPITOL AND PARTICULARLY IN THE ARMY HEADQUARTERS IS UNUSUALLY TENSE, WITH SECURITY EXTREMELY TIGHT, FOLLOWING A REPORTED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST PRESIDENT GHASHMI ON 17 OCTOBER. THERE IS CONCERN AMONG SOME LEADERS ABOUT THE LOYALTY OF ARMY UNITS TO GHASHMI, AND EVEN WORRY ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN OUTBREAK OF CIVIL WAR. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL ARRESTS AND ONE EXECUTION IN THE MILITARY, THERE IS NO CLEAR EVIDENCE OF OPPOSITION TO GHASHMI. GHASHMI HAS WEATHERED HIS CRITICAL FIRST WEEK IN OFFICE; HOWEVER, THERE IS CONCERN AS TO WHETHER HE CAN MAINTAIN HIS HOLD ON THE ARMY. (SECRET/NOFORN) VANCE

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